

# Just One More Bird

by Mirm Hurula

*Dear Brook,*

*Please come home. You've been out in the wilderness for too long. I'm afraid you'll die out there before seeing the life we've built here in the city. A life we want with you. Come as you are. Come with whoever you've become—whoever you've found. Please come home.*

*Just let us see you one last time.*

*Mom*

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Our world isn't like before. Communication across vastness isn't possible anymore. I'm the only one that travels long distances these days. The world is in shambles and people want to know if those they love are still alive. Their yearnings and deepest secrets put onto a piece of paper for me to give to another—another that may not even be alive.

Often, the writers would fall to their knees, tears soaking my third pair of sneakers from the trip. Morbid news is my companion across long journeys.

Almost always, I carry and read letters to the dead or to those with little life left. Crossing over arbitrary lines to new places and hellscape to traverse. Only needing to tell the gun pointed at me that I'm delivering letters. The world making itself beautiful again once I walk out of city walls so high migrating birds must fly around. Though, the city hasn't seen birds in years.

I write to the birds on the grass and in the sky when I hear their songs. They never respond. And, they have yet to return a letter.

Just like I have yet to return with a response.

An impassible part of my journey between two mountains. I look up admiring them. I've never seen another as tall. They were too

tall for me to climb over them. I would have to go through the path between them.

Nothing good ever happens in tight spaces like that.

As I enter, I hear gasping and cries in the distance and run as fast as the sound. The woman bleeding from her stomach, begging me to save her. Her words jumbled together like a priest giving themselves last rites. I don't know what to say—I know I can't save her. I choose to tell her anything she wants to hear. She will be okay. Her family will be safe. She'll see them all again soon. With the last tears streaming from her eyes, I'm met with her lifeless stare—one of many already seen.

I leave her body there for a creature to come looking for something to eat. I'd rather it eat her dead body than chase mine. After leaving her body, I reread the letter I was told to deliver to bring me back to my assignment.

*Dear Brook,*

*Please come home. You've been out in the wilderness for too long. I'm afraid you'll die out there before seeing the life we've built here in the city. A life we want with you. Come as you are. Come with whoever you've become—whoever you've found. Please come home.*

*Just let us see you one last time.*

*Mom*

I think out loud about what the mother did to her child to force them out—to go away from the safety of the city. It was dangerous enough for me to be walking outside of it with the bits of knowledge that I procured. But luck always finds its way to my side, washing over me every night to keep the beasts occupied—with speech or otherwise.

The other side of these mountains holds a spectacle. Lush green grass hugging the sides of a clear lake. Pink and white flowers littering the ground like the specks of dirt dancing with the city's artificial wind. The sky filled with tall billowing clouds, circling the center of the lake. The sky reflecting in the lake almost like at the tip of the ocean.

The air was still and silent. Not a single bird to be heard—not a flap of their wings.

I sit and write:

*Dear Bird,*

*Why haven't you made this lake your home? This is the most beautiful scene I have seen in all my travels. The air is clear. There are no smells. This could become your perfect home—a sanctuary. I would write letters to you every day and read them as you danced on the ground or chased the sky.*

*Oh, bird, why haven't you made this lake your home? You and your chicks would fly high with not a disturbance for miles. A peaceful sight, a wonderful silence, only echoing chirps bouncing from mountainside to mountainside. Clear waters to wash and clean waters to drink.*

*Bird, come to this place so that we may live.*

*Please, let me see you this one last time.*

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MIRM HURULA is an emerging Samoan author and poet taking their time to slowly investigate and write in literary genres they've been interested in since they were in elementary school. In their fiction writing, Mirm tends to gravitate toward science fiction and fantasy as these are their favorite genres of scripted media. They received a fellowship for Martha's Vineyard's Institute for Creative Writing's Conference in Summer 2021. And in August of 2022, they were accepted and participated in the Anaphora's Writing Residency, now labeled as an Anaphora fellow. Mirm incorporates Brown and queer stories into every piece they work to give representation they craved as a young avid reader. They hope that their stories can uplift and center voices that have never been a part of the mainstream.